

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-21 are pending in this application. Claims 13-15 stand withdrawn. By this Amendment claims 1 and 16 are currently amended. No new matter is added. Support for claim 1 may be found, at least, in Figs. 1-4 and paragraphs [0020]-[0023] of the specification. Claims 16 is amended to conform to the existing language of claim 1.

I. §112 Rejection

Claims 16, 17, 19 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for failing to comply with the written description requirement. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that the feature "having a length that is at least twice the width" in claim 16 is unsupported by the specification as filed.

Claims 16, as amended, no longer contains the above language, and now recites "wherein a width of each slit is in a range from 0.2 to 1 mm, and a length of each slit is from 1 mm to a length which is the shorter of (a)30 mm and (b) 1/2 of a length of the honeycomb structure." As such, claim 16 now complies with the written description requirement. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 16, and claims 17, 19, and 20 depending therefrom, is respectfully requested.

II. §103(a) Rejection of Claim 1

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 9-12, 18 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,248,689 to Manson in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,464,185 to Tomita et al. ("Tomita"). The Office Action also rejects claims 5-8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Manson in view of Tomita and further in view of EP 1 128 031 to Hidaka et al. ("Hidaka"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, as amended, recites "at least one slit per through channel is formed only in the vicinity of the plugging portion of the partition walls." Manson does not disclose or

suggest this feature. To the contrary, Figs. 1 and 4 of Manson show openings 108 (allegedly equivalent to the recited slit) along the entire length of the channel. Furthermore, neither Tomita nor Hidaka disclose or suggest this feature. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1, and claims 2, 4-12, 18 and 21 depending therefrom, is respectfully requested.

III. §103(a) Rejection of Claim 16

The Office Action rejects claims 16, 17, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,853,459 to Kuwamoto et al. ("Kuwamoto") in view of Manson and Tomita. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 16, as amended, recites the "width of each slit is in a range from 0.2 to 1 mm, and a length of each slit is from 1 mm to a length which is the shorter of (a)30 mm and (b) 1/2 of a length of the honeycomb structure."

Kuwamoto, either alone or in combination with Manson or Tomita, does not disclose or suggest the recited dimensions of the slit. As such, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 16, and claims 17, 19 and 20 depending therefrom, is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claim are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff
Registration No. 27,075

Moshe Wilensky
Registration No. 56,263

JAO:MKW/jfb

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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